

REMARKS

Applicants' attorney thanks the Examiner for her comments. Independent Claim 14 has been amended to indicate that the first seamless, single-piece side panel overlaps the first edge of the front portion of the chassis and the first edge of the back portion of the chassis. The second seamless, single-piece side panel overlaps the second edge of the front portion of the chassis and the second edge of the back portion of the chassis. The amendment is supported in Figs. 2-5 and page 4, middle paragraph of the specification.

The claimed pant-like absorbent garment is the product resulting from the process shown in Applicants' Fig. 4. A garment chassis 4 and side panels 6 and 8 are separately manufactured. The chassis is folded along its lateral centerline so that the front and back portions of the chassis are superimposed and face each other. Then, the side panels 6 and 8 are folded over and bonded to opposing edge portions of the chassis. To accomplish this, the side panels must overlap the edge portions of the chassis.

The Examiner rejected Claims 14-27 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent 5,204,997 to Suzuki et al. This rejection is respectfully traversed. Because Claim 24 was previously canceled, this rejection is discussed with respect to Claims 14-23 and 25-27.

Regarding Claim 14, Suzuki et al. discloses a disposable absorbent garment having a chassis, and elastic waistbands 7 connecting the front edge to the rear edge on both sides of the chassis (See Fig. 1). Suzuki et al. does not disclose waistbands which overlap the edges of the chassis. Referring to Fig. 1, for instance, the waistbands 7 may be connected between the topsheet (outer cover) and backsheet (bodyside liner), and may be bonded to one or both layers (Col. 3, lines 10-17). The waistbands 7 may also be bonded only to corners of the backsheet, when the corners of the backsheet are folded over to face inward and provide an inner surface (Fig. 2C, Col. 3, lines 54-64). None of the disclosed waistbands has edges which overlap (i.e., extend over) the edges of the chassis so as to be visible from the outer surface of the chassis, for instance, and bonded to the outer surface.

Figs. 3A, 3B and 3C of Suzuki et al. further illustrate the position of elastic bands 7 relative to the remainder of the absorbent article. In each embodiment, the elastic bands 7 are apparently bonded to an inner surface of the absorbent article, i.e., to an inner

surface of the topsheet 2. Fig. 4 illustrates another embodiment in which the elastic bands 7 are apparently bonded to an inner surface of the topsheet 2. In the embodiments of Figs. 5 and 6, the elastic bands 7 are bonded to an inner surface of the garment chassis. In the embodiment of Fig. 7, the elastic bands 7 may be bonded between different layers of the chassis. In no instance do the edges of the elastic bands 7 overlap side edges of the garment chassis.

Persons of ordinary skill in the art would generally understand the term "side panels" to require something more than just narrow elastic bands present only at the waist opening. Referring to Applicants' Figs. 2 and 3, for instance, the side panels 6 and 8 are much longer (in the longitudinal direction of the garment) than the elastic waistbands 22 present only at the waist openings. Persons of ordinary skill in the art would not consider the narrow elastic waistbands 7, illustrated in Suzuki et al., to constitute a disclosure of side panels.

Even if the narrow elastic waistbands were considered to be side panels, Suzuki et al. would not disclose side panels which overlap the edge portions of the chassis as required by independent Claim 14. For these reasons, Suzuki et al. does not anticipate the claims. Claims 15-23 and 25-27 depend from Claim 14, and are patentable for at least the same reasons.

Applicants believe that the claims, as now presented, are patentable over the prior art. Reconsideration and allowance of the case are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



Maxwell J. Petersen
Registration No. 32,772

Pauley Petersen and Erickson
2800 West Higgins Road
Suite 365
Hoffman Estates, Illinois 60195
TEL (847) 490-1400
FAX (847) 490-1403